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**RESEARCH PAPER****Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness among Young Adults and Older Retired Population**

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**ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to determine whether there is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness among young adults and older retired population. It was hypothesized that there would be a difference in feelings of loneliness in both populations. The sample size consisted of 80 participants in which 40 participants were young adults (18-25 years), selected from a private university, 40 participants were older retired (60+ years), each set consisted 20 male and 20 female participants. Emotional Intelligence was tested through Schulte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, while Loneliness was assessed using Revised UCLA Loneliness scale. The result showed a difference ( $p = 0.040$ ) between the feelings of loneliness of young adults and older retired population, they indicate negative correlation ( $r = -0.348$ ) between Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness, depicting that lower levels of Loneliness in individual with high Emotional Intelligence. The research carries implications for further intervention focusing on coping strategies to counter the negative effects of Loneliness and enhancement of Emotional Intelligence from a younger age.

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**KEYWORDS**

Adulthood, Changes, Development, Elderly, Emotional Intelligence, Emotions, Isolation, Loneliness, Old Age, Retirement, Student Life, Young

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**Introduction**

Nowadays, physical health and mental health are the most discussed areas in our society yet we forget to ponder on the importance of emotional health. Our emotions are the main aspect by which we relate and connect with our physical surrounding. We all understand that when we feel helpless or emotionally unstable, it also affects our physical health. In order to have a healthy mind, we need to have a healthy emotional state, which plays a vital role in influencing our physical health and wellbeing. Therefore, both our psychological wellbeing and physical health depend upon our emotional state. The contemporary attempt to conceptualize the notion of intelligence has given birth to different theories. Hence, topics such as practical intelligence, social intelligence, spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence have ignited the fire of pursuit of rejuvenating the concept of intelligence throughout the realm of psychologist. Mostly, the emotions have been studied through the diversified resources to assure the significance of emotional intelligence effectively.

Emotional intelligence (EI) which refers to the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions. In 1990 a seminar paper of Salovey and Mayer defined Emotional Quotient (EQ) as a scientifically testable "intelligence". However, the concept gained popularity through Goleman's (1995) bestseller book titled *Emotional Intelligence*, the term Emotional Intelligence is defined as "The ability to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions and to recognize, understand and influence the emotions of others."

Emotional intelligence has turned out to be an interesting topic of psychology and many researchers have found individual differences in emotional intelligence (Law, Wong & Song, 2004; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008). Emotional intelligence does not only help in intellectual and emotional growth but it also promotes social mindfulness. Emotional intelligence isn't just characterized as perceiving and understanding feelings, utilizing feelings in subjective procedures and overseeing feelings, yet it additionally influences the administration of feelings and individual usefulness identified with people's social mindfulness and points (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004).

Research showed that emotional intelligence increased with the age which helps older adults to have subjective well-beings in their lives. A study revealed out that subjective well-being in older adults is enhanced due to increased emotional intelligence (Chen, Peng and Fang, 2016). A research showed women have greater ability of emotional intelligence as compared to men. And middle-aged adults have scored high on ability of emotional intelligence as compare to younger and older adults. This research supports the idea that during aging both gender and age meaningfully influence the emotional intelligence ability of a person (Cabello, Sorrel, Fernández-Pinto, Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2016). It can be seen that emotional intelligence is useful in wide array of domains in life; perceiving and expressing emotions accurately improves understanding of the self and of others which is important in maintaining interpersonal harmony and social interaction. Emotional intelligence influence life satisfaction, it also correlates with the feelings of loneliness.

Individual's being engaged in inadequate relations and unsatisfactory social encounters on an individual basis may affect their lives to various degrees. This may lead to people isolating themselves from the general public and feeling alone (Yılmaz, Hamarta, Arslan and Deniz, 2013). Loneliness is also defined as a psychologically disturbing condition that affects a person's position in his/her psychological well-being, emotional and physiological characteristics (Ernst and Cacioppo, 1999)., It is characterized as an on-going, argumentative subjective experience that nearly ends a person into isolation, as a result of self-perceived deficiencies in social relationships (Peplau and Perlman 1982). Thus, it is not a one-way relationship the two variables can either promote or inhibit one another. The feeling of loneliness was negatively considerably moving the aspects of emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents (Joshi & Kang, 2015).

According to Margaret Paul (2016), Emotional intelligence is one of the factors that contribute to loneliness. People connect with each other at common level of emotional

health. The low the emotional growth is the more you will feel disconnected to your family and friends.

The feelings of loneliness are commonly experienced in all ages. But these feelings change with the age. People experience the feeling of loneliness more in age of adolescent and old ages that is over 65 years. Research also showed that the feelings of loneliness slowly fade away during middle adulthood (Pinquart, 2001).

Figure 1.1 Relationships of emotional intelligence and Loneliness-Proposed theoretical framework, is based on the subscales of Schutte Emotional Intelligence and in this framework Emotional Intelligence is linked to Loneliness through different factors. Emotional intelligence is one of the factors that contribute to loneliness, based on Margaret Paul's article.

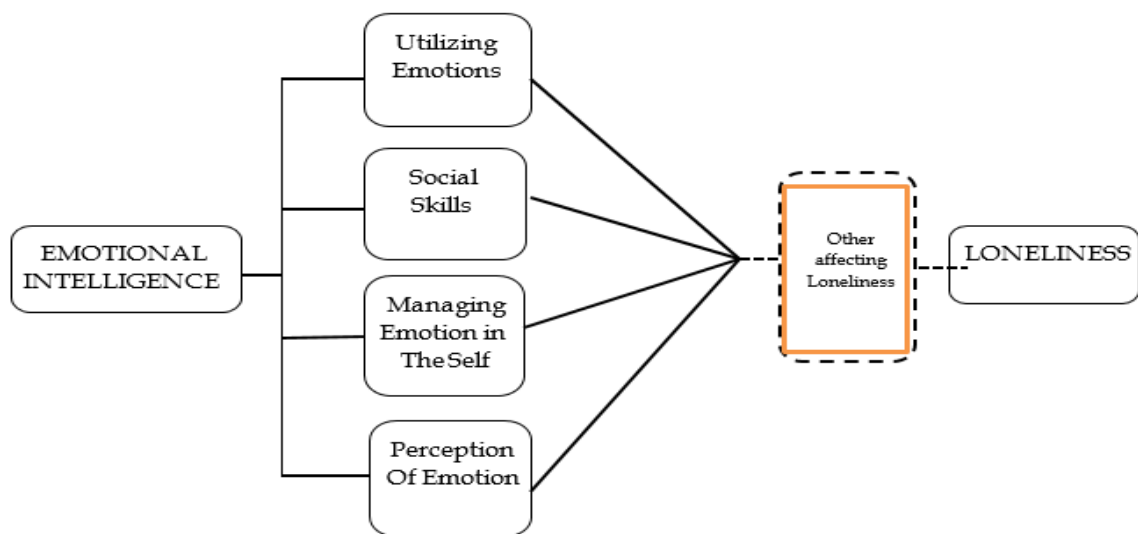


Figure 1 Relationships of Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness-Proposed Theoretical Framework

There are four factors that contribute to emotional intelligence. The first factor is that of the perception of emotions. It includes ability to recognize and identify the emotions of self and others. It includes both verbal and non-verbal cues. Managing emotions in the self is another category of emotional intelligence, which includes ability of a person to regulate and manage the emotion of the self and respond to the emotions according to the situation. Social skill factor includes a competent ability to communicate and interact with each other. Another category of emotional intelligence is utilizing emotions which facilitates thinking and give awareness of physical sensation. The way we use and perceive emotions are linked with the way we interact with each other and with feeling of loneliness. According to Zysberg (2012), The potential associations of loneliness with Emotional Intelligence (EI), a pair of its correlates (life satisfaction and a way of meaning), and several other background variables were tested Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis provided support for the model, suggesting that the presence of EI, and size and availableness of somebody's social network area unit the strongest correlates of loneliness.

The purpose of this research study is to understand whether a relationship exists between emotional intelligence and loneliness and to investigate the relationship of these

variables in different age groups. Those individuals who scored low on Schutte's emotional intelligence scale may have feelings of loneliness or feelings of isolation. As a result, such individuals could be assisted and provided with strategies and therapies to increase their level of emotional intelligence. This way they can easily understand their own and other's emotions which would help them increase their social interaction that would eventually result in the decreased feeling of loneliness. In the light of above literature review and rationale,

it was hypothesized that There would be a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness among young adults and older adults. Another hypothesis derived from literature was that there would be significant difference in loneliness level of young adult and older population.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Participants**

Different universities were selected and approached for data collection of young adults. A sample of 40 participants were selected, age range 18 to 25 including 20 (25%) males and 20 (25%) females. Different areas were selected for data collection of retired older adults. A sample of 40 participants were selected, age 60 and above including 20 (25%) males and 20 (25%).

### **Sampling technique:**

Convenient sampling technique was used in whole data collection process.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

All the participants who finalized can speak and read English language. Older adults include only those participants who are retired from a respective job.

## **Material and Methods**

**Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)** created by Dr. Nicola Schutte in 1998, is based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original model of emotional intelligence. It is 5-point Likert scale with 6 subscales that is Dimensions Items Appraisal of Emotions in the Self (AES; 2 items), Appraisal of Emotions in Others (AEO; 7 items), Emotional Expression (EE; 2 items), Emotional Regulation of the Self (ERS; 8 items), Emotional Regulation of Others (ERO; 5 items), Utilization of Emotions in Problem Solving (UEPS; 4 items) and the rest of 5 items were named as uncategorized. Scoring of scale is done by calculating the reverse coding items 3, 28 and 33 and then summing up all the items together. Overall scores range from 33 to 165. Higher scores indicate more distinctive emotional intelligence. The reliability of emotional intelligence scale was measured by Cronbach's alpha, which was found to be .90

(Schutte, et.al, 1998). Its internal consistency for the scale is .87, with a test-retest reliability of to-week is .78. The overall score for this scale is equally measured for both adults and adolescents (Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar, 2001).

**REVISED UCLA Loneliness Scale (R-UCLA).** In 1978, Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson developed items for the original version of UCLA scale which was based on statements that described feelings of loneliness. The revised version of UCLA scale was developed by Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, in 1980. The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (R-UCLA) consists of 20 Likert-type scale items (10 items in negative direction; 10 items in positive direction) reflecting satisfaction and dissatisfaction with social relationships. The development of the R-UCLA Loneliness Scale was reported to have a measure of high reliability in terms of internal consistency (coefficient alpha ranging from .89 to .96) and a test-retest reliability over a period of 1 year ( $r = .73$ ).

### Procedure

For the desired sample of young adult participants were selected with the help of university authorities., Inform consent and demographic forms were taken from each participant including young adults and older adults. Ethical considerations were taken into account that is participants have rights to leave study anytime they feel comfortable, their information is confidential. Measures were administered in an individual setting. On average participants took 25 to 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Later participants were debriefed about the purpose of research. The scoring process of the questionnaires was done in accordance to the instructions provided by the authors of the scales, in their respected manuals.

### Results and Discussion

This section contains a result obtained through the analysis of the data. The hypotheses were tested using inferential and descriptive statistical methods. Correlational was applied to the data using SPSS to discover the relationship between the variables.

**Table 1**  
**Frequencies and percentages of participant's demographics (N=80)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	40	50.0%
Female	40	50.0%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	41	51.2%
Married	31	38.8%
Widow	8	10.0%
<b>Birth Order</b>		
First	19	23.8%
Second	25	31.3%
Third	7	8.8%
Fourth	4	5.0%
Fifth	12	15.0%
Sixth	13	16.3%
<b>Family Structure</b>		
Nuclear	55	68.8%
Joint	25	31.2%
<b>Kind of Job</b>		
Business	2	2.5%
Call Center	3	3.8%
Teaching	2	2.5%
Retired	40	50.0%
None	33	41.3%

The above table provides descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages of demographic variables.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for emotional intelligence and loneliness in adults and older population (N=90).**

	Mean	SD	$\omega$
Emotional Intelligence	119.85	20.56	.925
Loneliness	44.67	9.39	.770

SD: Standard Deviation

Table 2 provides statistics including mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence and loneliness among the N (80) participants included in the sampling frame. According to the values of the above mentioned table the data of the current study normally distributed. Table 2 shows the higher reliability of Emotional Intelligence scale ( $\alpha = 0.925$ ) and the moderate reliability of the UCLA Loneliness scale ( $\alpha = 0.770$ )

### Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used in the current research to find the relationship between the variables. The emotional intelligence was the independent variable whereas the loneliness was the dependent variable in this study.

### Hypothesis 1

There would be a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness:

**Table 3**  
**Loneliness**

Emotional Intelligence	-.348**
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N = 80, \*\*p < .001

The correlation analysis was done using SPSS which showed that emotional intelligence has a significant negatively weak correlation with the loneliness (p-value is -0.282).

### Hypothesis 2

There would be a significant difference in the feeling of loneliness of Adults and Older Population.

**Table 4**  
**Difference in scores between Young Adult and Older (Retired) for Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness**

	Emotional Intelligence		Loneliness	
	Young Adult	Older (Retd.)	Young Adult	Older (Retd.)
Mean	115.15	124.55	48.42	7.32
SD	21.90	18.19	40.92	9.81
P-Value	0.040		0.000	

p values are based on 2-sample independent t-tests. SD: standard deviation, Retd.: Retired

There is a significant difference in the Emotional intelligence and Loneliness level of Adults and Older as per significant value which is less than 0.05

**Table 5**  
**Difference in scores between Young Adult and Older (Retired) for Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness gender wise**

	Emotional Intelligence		Loneliness	
	Young Adult	Older (Retd.)	Young Adult	Older (Retd.)
MALES				
Mean	116.15	125.70	48.55	39.80
SD	27.65	15.64	8.43	7.24
P-Value	0.187		0.001	
FEMALES				
Mean	114.15	123.40	48.30	42.05
SD	14.77	20.78	6.23	11.94
P-Value	0.113		0.045	

p values are based on 2-sample independent t-tests. SD: standard deviation, Retd.: Retired

With reference to the gender There is a significant difference in the Loneliness level of Adults and Older as per significant value which is less than 0.05

## Discussion

The present study was conducted to see if there exists a relationship between Emotional Intelligence (utilizing emotions, social skills, managing emotions and perception of emotions) and Loneliness. Nowadays, Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in every aspect of our lives. It helps people to deal with the negative emotions effectively and feel positive emotions which enhance growth and wellbeing of individual (Brackett, Rivers and Salovey, 2011). The hypotheses were tested using statistical analysis SPSS (version 22) which proves the first hypothesis of the study. There is a significant weak negative correlation between emotional intelligence and loneliness (Table 4, Figure 2). According to Zysberg (2012), there exists a negative association between emotional intelligence and loneliness. One of the possible reasons was that people regardless of their levels of emotional intelligence are still able to manage interactions socially as it is a requirement in every aspect of our lives. As we see in academic perspective, people are interacting with each other for various purposes. Due to these interactions and busy schedule, feelings of loneliness are not apparent in these people. Greater social support was associated with the lower level of loneliness (Utz, Swenson, Caserta, Lund and devries, 2013)

Results found out through statistical analysis support the second hypothesis that there is a significant moderate difference in feelings of loneliness of adults and older population. (Table 5) Results of this study revealed that young adults have high feelings of loneliness as compared to the older adults. A relevant study revealed that young adults age range 15 to 24 have highest feelings of loneliness (20%) while only (16%) older adults showed high loneliness (Pinquart and sorenson, 2010).

Religion is one of the strong reasons to support the hypothesis. Our religious teachings taught us to be kind to the older adults and support them more as their age increases. Older adults in our society are considered strong pillar of family. Family members don't leave them in old houses nor did they move out leaving their parents at

home. Religion is the supportive source in aged people (Sheikoleslami, et al., 2012). There are Ahadees given on this matter are as follow:

And he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The Most Merciful has mercy on those who are merciful. Be merciful to those who are on earth so that the One Who is in heaven will have mercy on you." (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1924)

Another Hadees showing the importance of serving parents which is considered as older adults in this study. "It was narrated that „Abd-Allah ibn Masood said: I asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), which deed is most beloved to Allah? He said, Prayer offered on time. He said, then what? He said, then honoring one's parents. He said, then what? He said, Jihad for the sake of Allah."

Further, reason for the high feelings of loneliness in adults could be adjustment and acceptance issues at that age as young adults feel like no one understands what they are going through due to which feeling of loneliness develops. In these recent years, due to the social media the young adults are more focused on appearing attractive and getting accepted by others which have distorted their self-esteem and increased the feelings of loneliness. Research shows that social media has caused rise in depression and suicide (Twenge , 2017)

## **Conclusion**

The study demonstrates the existence of a significant weak negative relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Loneliness, however moderate significant difference was found in Emotional Intelligence level of adults and older population. When feeling of loneliness of adults and older population was checked, a significant moderate difference was indeed found.

## **Recommendations**

Our major limitation of the study was the small sample size (N=60) due to which the results cannot be generalized to larger population. To further concrete the results obtained, it is recommended that for additional researches in the field, a larger sample size should be selected. This research has been done in order to highlight the importance of emotional intelligence and its relation with loneliness. Gender differences can also be highlighted using research in similar areas so as to know whether any significant correlation between emotional intelligence and loneliness exists. More work can be done on the variable of loneliness with respect to age and see if there is any correlation between these two variables. Further survey and researches should be conducted because minor research literature work has been done on this topic. As concern about emotional intelligence with respect to loneliness is becoming more and more common in Pakistan and other countries, such relationships should be researched so that people can be aware of the importance of emotional intelligence related to loneliness.



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